



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 25 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Martha Trevino Powell
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **May 17, 2010**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi	Dr. Maria Rochart
Patricia Curry	Stacey Savelle
Susan F. Friedman	Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Helen A. Kleinberg	Martha Trevino Powell
Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Ann Franzen	Rev. Cecil L. Murray
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Sandra Rudnick

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curry at 10:04 a.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- **May 17, 2010**

Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Kleinberg, seconded by Commissioner Rochart, the agenda for May 17, 2010, was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- **April 19, 2010**

500 West Temple Street, Hall of Administration, Room B-22, Los Angeles, CA 90012

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Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Kleinberg, seconded by Commissioner Rochart, the minutes for April 19, 2010, were unanimously approved.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Curry reported that the Commission needs to begin working on the Commission's 2009-10 Annual Report. Don Ashton, Deputy Executive Officer, will provide the Commission an outline for the report, and Commission Staff will gather necessary information from the individual Committee Chairs and Ad-Hoc Committee members for the preparation of the Report.

VI. PRESENTATIONS

a. First Supervisorial District Education Pilot Project Martha Molina-Aviles, Deputy First Supervisorial District

Ms. Martha Molina-Aviles, reported that Supervisor Molina's growing concern for the education of foster youth and preparing them for emancipation, motivating her to create the First Supervisorial District Education Pilot Project (FSDEPP) for foster youth, in grades nine through twelve, residing in the First Supervisorial District. The FSDEPP, which began in April 2009, was developed in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office, Education Coordination Council (ECC), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Montebello and Pomona Unified School Districts. Copies of the FSDEPP's Fact Sheet, Educational Assessment Form, and Case Plan, were provided ([copies on file](#)).

Ms. Molina-Aviles, further, added the following:

- The initial plan was for a fifty percent funding match by the Montebello Unified School District. However, due to the \$9 million budget deficit which impacted schools, the project has been fully funded by First District Discretionary funds which amount to approximately \$500,000 per year.
- Currently funded are three full-time non-case-carrying Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers and one supervisor dedicated to the Pilot Project. Two DCFS social workers provide services to high schools in the Montebello Unified School District, and one at the Pomona Unified School District. The full-time social workers average about 50 cases each.
- Supervisor Molina devised the Assessment form used for the FSDEPP. She also insists that a Case Plan is in place for all youth. Social workers complete an Education Assessment for each student and develop a Case Plan accordingly, similarly to the process used by Team Decision Making (TDM).

- Casey Family Foundation has provided funding to evaluate the FSDEPP, and recommends its continuation. The first evaluation conducted was for the non-case carrying social workers. This year, an evaluation will be conducted for the new case-carrying social workers. Evaluations of the two models will be used to determine the success of the case-carrying social workers.
- Unfortunately, due to limited funding, the First Supervisorial District is unable to expand the pilot project to all schools within its District. However, through collaborative efforts with DCFS, the FSDEPP has been expanded to the El Monte Union High School District, with plans to implement the pilot at the Bassett, Hacienda/La Puente, and El Rancho Unified School Districts, using a modified approach. With this approach, the youth's primary social worker will be responsible for developing educational assessments and plans, as opposed to utilizing a non-case-carrying social worker as the lead.
- In an effort to encourage students, they are invited to attend the graduation ceremonies, and the First District presents scrolls to youth upon graduation.
- The Montebello School District Superintendent attributed the FSDEPP to its increasing graduation rates for foster youth. In 2009, thirteen foster youth graduated, and this year twelve are scheduled for graduation.

Ms. Molina-Aviles acknowledged the great partnership that has been developed with DCFS Director Trisha Ploehn, as well as with Ms. Maryam Fatemi, Deputy Director, DCFS, who have been instrumental with the FSDEPP, and with the modified pilot project.

Ms. Fatemi reported the following:

- The new model began with a "Data Match" conducted between children attending the El Monte Union High School District and the DCFS database to identify foster care children. Additionally, the Child Welfare System (CWS) was cleared to confirm the existence of other siblings associated with the foster youth in question. Youth along with their siblings are then assigned to social workers who were co-located within the foster youth's school district.
- There is an operational agreement signed by DCFS Director Ploehn and the School Board in which DCFS agrees to train personnel in the schools in dealing with foster youth. DCFS also informs school district personnel on the requirements associated with enrolling a child in foster care.
- DCFS receives full access to all school records for foster children in order to develop a comprehensive Case Plan. Judge Michael Nash was instrumental for providing blanket orders for the information sharing.
- Many school districts have expressed interest in the FSDEPP.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Ms. Molina-Aviles added the following:

- Probation youth are not directly served through the FSDEPP; however, there are a few youths who have crossed cover from DCFS to the Probation Department, or are on a dual supervision, these instances are handled on a case by case basis. Additionally, social workers serving crossover youth or youth on dual supervision will collaborate with the Probation Department as needed.
- Currently a comparison of drop out rates for the FSDEPP versus regular high school youth is not available, primarily due to the relative infancy of the project.
- Due to funding resources, the FSDEPP is focusing on preparing high school students; but, through the El Monte paradigm, younger siblings will also be serviced. Ms. Fatemi added that DCFS is focusing on early childhood education through several projects in collaboration with the Head Start Program, Casey Family Programs, and the Education Coordinating Council (ECC).
- ILP Coordinators have been also been included in the FSDEPP. Coordinators are invited to attend regularly held meetings, or are brought to the table if needed.
- The First Supervisorial District has shared the FSDEPP with the other Board Offices.
- A mechanism is not in place to track the progress of youth after they graduate; however, through funding allocated by Supervisor Molina and the Casey Family Foundation, evaluations are underway. Additionally through a collaborative effort with the Center for Non-Profit Management, a study to track foster youth in college is also forthcoming.

Action Taken:

After discussion, the Commission received and filed the verbal reports by Ms. Molina-Aviles and Ms. Fatemi on the First Supervisorial District Education Pilot Project.

b. DCFS Red Team

Jennifer Lopez, DCFS

Jennifer Lopez, Division Chief of Risk Management, DCFS, and members of the DCFS Red Team: Rosella Yousef, David Green, Patricia Perez-Harris and Blanca Bonilla gave an overview of the functions the DCFS Red Team, and reported the following:

- The DCFS Red Team (Team) evolved in November 2009, and is on-call 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The team is responsible for investigating and reporting all child fatalities and critical incidents to the Board of Supervisors,

Board Deputies, and to DCFS Director, Trish Ploehn, within a specified time frame of four to eight hours of the incident.

- The Team investigates every fatality where there is a suspicion of abuse and neglect with prior DCFS history. Once a hotline alert is issued, and it is determined that the case meets the criteria, an expedited report is completed. A separate report is provided to the Board of Supervisors within three-days, followed by a 30-day report.
- The Team also investigates critical incidents as a proactive or preventive measure. Following the investigation, a report identifying systemic or policy issues is sent to the Regional Managers who, in turn, have a certain amount of time to provide a corrective action plan.
- All ER Children Social Workers (CSWs) have gone through a new academy core training, and have been received training from DCFS titled 'Enhancing Safety: Some Key Reminders "A Safe Child"' with the "Top Ten" existing Critical areas that must be addressed by the CSWs. Since the implementation of the "Top Ten," there has been a significant increase in the amount of detail and documentation that CSWs include in their reports.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, the DCFS Red Team added the following:

- Collaboration and communication between community partners (i.e. Sheriffs Department, schools, day-care providers, etcetera) are some of the systemic issues that have been identified the by the Team.
- CSWs interviews with minors generally take place at the minor's home, but sometimes may take place at schools. In instances where the CSW observes that the minor is uncomfortable in the presence of the parent/caretaker in the home, CSWs visit children at school.
- CSWs alert the Court in instances where children are afraid of parents or caretakers, and the Court makes appropriate orders (i.e. monitored visits) which are used by attorneys to request visitations.
- To address the turnaround time for completion of case investigations, CSWs are having support staff assist with the gathering of prior DCFS history, which contributes to time savings.
- The new DCFS ARC System and the Runaway Outreach Program have vastly improved the manner in which DCFS addresses runaways. There is a tremendous level of effort that workers dedicate to locate runaway youth.

- Criminal background checks are conducted on adults (i.e. “boyfriend/ girlfriends”) who spend time with children, to ensure they are not registered sex offenders or have a history of violence.
- The statistics on co-sleeping deaths are difficult to ascertain, often times these cases receive an undetermined cause of death from the Coroner’s report.
- The Team works with Rose Belda, Lead Attorney, Children’s Services Investigation Unit (CSIU). Ms. Belda reviews the Team’s cases and makes recommendations to systemic or policy issues. Ms. Belda’s findings and/or recommendations are then forwarded to the Board of Supervisors and ultimately to DCFS Executive Team to initiate policy changes, if needed.

Ms. Aleen Langton, County Counsel, noted that reports generated by Ms. Belda to the Board of Supervisors are attorney-client privileged communications.

Ms. Brenda Dabney, Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles, addressed the Commission.

Action Taken:

After discussion, the Commission received and filed the verbal reports by Ms. Jennifer Lopez, Division Chief of Risk Management, DCFS, and staff on the overview of the DCFS Red Team.

c. Title IV-E Waiver Update

Lisa Parrish, DCFS

By Common Consent, and there being no objection, this presentation was taken off calendar as requested by the Chair.

VII. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Director Trish Ploehn, DCFS, reported the following:

- The 60-day extension referenced in a recent L. A. Times Article is the result of requests made by DCFS to improve child safety and to enhance the quality of work DCFS social workers are required to perform on investigations. The extension was not due to a back log of cases, as suggested by the article.
- To address the back log of current pending investigation cases, DCFS has redeployed and shifted social workers and resources to the front end of the Department. Consequently, some DCFS programs will be reduced due to these changes, and caseloads to the front end of the Department have risen.

Chair Curry noted that Permanency for youths exiting the system is critical and should be addressed accordingly; if youths are ignored, the likelihood of their offspring entering the children and family protective service system increases.

- DCFS has formalized a request to the State to turn the current 60-day extension to a two-year demonstration project, which will coincide with the completion of DCFS's current Title IV-E Waiver.
- A memo, dated April 12, 2010, regarding 'Ensuring Children's Safety – Enhancing Safety: Some Key Reminders "A Safe Child"' ([copy on file](#)) was distributed. "A Safe Child" document lists the ten most critical areas that CSWs must consider in every ongoing assessment/and or case planning throughout the time a child and family is serviced by DCFS. This document is the end product of the Emergency Response Study conducted in 2009. "A Safe Child" has been laminated and distributed to all DCFS offices.
- The Governor's budget was released last Friday; the anticipated \$17.1 million were not recovered, and major cuts are expected in the In-Home-Support-Services (IHSS) Program, Mental Health Services, and the elimination of Calworks.

Action Taken:

After discussion, Director Ploehn's verbal report was received and filed.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Carrie Miller, Chief Executive Office, Education Coordination Council, addressed the Commission.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Sorkin commented on an item on the following items on the Board of Supervisors' May 18, 2010, agenda:

- Item No. 25, related to renewal of agreements for 18 out-of-home child placements by the Department of Mental Health at \$22 million, and inquired whether DCFS was consulted on this agreement. She expressed that she is concerned that resources are not spent locally which is the best approach to family.
- Item 2, related to Supervisor Yaroslavsky "Countywide Fitness Challenge," and inquired on a protocol that the Commission worked on with DCFS (Dr. Sophy's Office).

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Curry at 11:47 a.m.